

APPENDIX

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Letters from People for Better TV Members

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People for Better TV Coalition Members
December 18, 2000

Access Channel City of Compton
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Documentary
American Foundation for the Blind
American Society for Deaf Children
Ann Arbor-Washington County NOW
A. Philip Randolph Institute
Appalshop
Arab Community Center for Economic & Social Services
Arizona Consumers' Council
Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers
Benton Foundation
Branch County NOW
Bread 4 the World
Bridge the Gap—Family Day Care Network
Brightmoor Community Center
Broadcast Minister's Alliance of Chicago
CA Chicano News Media
CA Commission on the Status of Women
CA National Organization for Women
CA Women's Agenda
California – Free Press
California – National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians
California - National Conference of Christian's and Jews
California – National Writers Union UAW AFL-CIO
Carolina Peace Resource Center
Catholic Pastoral Alliance
Center for Information, Technology, and Society
Center for Young Women's Development
Chicago Access Corporation
Chicago Area Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
Chicago - League of United Latin American Citizens
Chicago Media Watch
Chicago - NOW
Children of Gays and Lesbians Everywhere
Childserv
Christian Communication Council of Metropolitan Detroit Churches
Chinese for Affirmative Action
Citizens for Independent Public Broadcasting
Citizens' Media Corps

Coalition of Labor Union Women
Cobb County NOW
Columbia Consumer Education Council
Community Media Workshop
Community Mental Health Council
Community Technology Center's Network
Concerned Black Clergy
Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf
Consumer Action
Consumer Federation of CA
Cultural Environment Movement
Deaf Entertainment Foundation
Department of Media Studies University of San Francisco
Detroit NOW
Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting
First African Methodist Episcopal Church - Wilshire Blvd. Temple
First Unitarian Universalist Church
Georgia Public Interest Research Group
Globalvision
Global Ministries United Methodist Church
Green Party of Metro-Detroit
Greater Chicago Broadcast Ministries
Harlem Consumer Educational Council, Inc.
Hispanic Media Coalition
Houston Media Source
Illinois Campaign for Political Reform
Illinois Public Interest Research Group
Illinois Violence Prevention Authority
Independent Media Institute
Interfaith Broadcasting Commission
Interfaith Council
Internews
Internews Interactive
Jamaica Cultural Alliance
Kartemquin Films, Ltd.
LA Archdiocese
LA - NAACP
LA Urban League
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement
Latino Public Broadcasting
Lavender Alliance
League of Women Voters—Los Angeles
Libraries for the Future
Loka Institute
LULAC Houston District

MADD—Wayne County Michigan Chapter
Manhattan Neighborhood Network
Massachusetts Consumers' Coalition
MediaChannel
Media Education Foundation
Media Image Coalition
Mediascope
Metropolitan Christian Council: Detroit-Windsor
Mexican American Legal and Educational Fund (MALDEF)
Michigan Association of Retired School Personnel
Michigan Consumer Federation
Michigan Institute for Nonviolence Education
Michigan Music Campaign
MultiCultural Collaborative
The Muslim Center, Detroit
NAACP
National Association of Latino Elected Officials (NALEO)
National Capital Area Trade Union Retirees
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Greater Detroit Area
National Council of Churches
National Hook-Up of Black Women, Inc
National Institute on Media and the Family
National Indian Telecommunications Institute
National Puerto Rican Coalition
National Rainbow PUSH Coalition
NOW—Greater Boston Chapter
NOW—California Action Center
NOW—Montgomery County
NOW—New York City
NOW, University of Michigan—Dearborn Campus Group
NOW—Western Wayne County Chapter
New California Media
Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say
Oakland County NOW
Older Women's League
OMB Watch
Pacific News Service
Peace Action
Philadelphia – Black Clergy
Philadelphia – Catholic Relief Agency
Philadelphia – IBEW Local 98
Philadelphia – NAACP
Philadelphia – UCFW Local 1776
Philadelphia – Urban Family Council
Physicians for Social Responsibility

Protestants for the Common Good
Public Media Inc.
Public Service Media and Marketing
Pontiac Area Urban League
Prevention Coalition of Southeast Michigan (PREVCO)
Rocky Mountain Media Watch
San Fernando Valley Alliance for Democracy
Self Help for Hard of Hearing People
School of the Americas Watch West
Social Concerns Committee of SFV
Southern Rural Development Initiative
Street-Level Youth Media
Talenton Bilingue de Houston
Telecommunications for the Deaf, Inc.
United University Church
Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community
Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press
Working In The Schools
WWNews
Youth Connection

people for better tv •

December 11, 2000

Honorable William Kennard, Chair Federal Communications Commission,

I am writing to you on behalf of the California chapter of People for Better TV. We have been making station visits in many California communities to inspect the public file and would like to apprise you of what we have found.

We watched local television programming to determine what community shows they produced "to serve the public interest" during the month of November, and sent letters to station public affairs directors to comment on what we found. One objective of the station visit was to see if our letter was in their file.

In short, the local stations are for the most part not "serving the public interest." There is very little true community programming and if they have a local public affairs show it is, on the average, one half hour, and it probably airs very early on a weekend morning when few viewers are watching. Some stations also point to their Public Service Announcements as serving the community, but too often they air in the middle of the night, again, when few viewers are watching. Most stations point to news as satisfying their public interest requirement, however too often the news is just a sensational crime report — if it bleeds it leads.

To make matters worse, the stations are generally unprepared and unwelcoming to public inspection of the files. And the files are rarely completely in order. For example, the reports are not standardized, the 3rd quarter issues and needs reports and PSA's are not listed the same way at any station. Some station reports show programming content and the number of times programs or PSA's aired, some do not. Some stations list non-broadcast contributions, some don't. Some stations have emails as well as letters in the file and some don't.

People for Better TV/California urge the Commission to ensure that the new rules for digital broadcasters establish programming guidelines that truly "serve the public interest." Clearly, that is not the case with current broadcasters.

Sacramento visits with Elena Perez:
November 30th 2pm
FOX KTXL Sacramento

I called KTXL to ask whether they had any local public affairs programs. I had a short and difficult conversation with Eylse Dietrick, who told me, "stations are no longer obligated to serve the public interest." I was so stunned I asked her to confirm what she said and I wrote it down immediately. Is this what we've come to? I confirmed that they have NO local community programming. They offer PSA's and local crime/news show. They also have a public relations campaign called "Step up and Change Happens." They use their web site, which provides largely promotional information to viewers.

When we visited the station within minutes of the time we arrived Audrey Farrington, the General Manager, of the station came over to offer us a meeting. Ms. Farrington had the letter I sent to the station in her hand, and invited us to sit and talk for about 20 minutes. When I raised the issue of the inappropriateness of Ms. Dietrick's comment, Ms. Farrington excused this as "I didn't talk with the right person," but didn't have an answer as to why her employee would think that. She went on to argue that if folks don't like their programs they can change the channel, and if a show gets low ratings it gets canceled. Therefore, she said, broadcasting is democratic. So much for community dialogue.

Their issues report listed: Drugs and Alcohol, Arts and Culture, Community Service, Crime and Prevention, Disability, Economic Growth, Education, Environment, Government, Health and Safety, Minority Issues, Poverty and Homelessness, Traffic and Transportation, Youth. About 30% were crime reports and not useful for community programming.

They had the minimal children's program a mix of cartoon and education. They also included baseball and junior NFL—which did not feature girls! The children's shows were Beakman's world, Magic School Bus and Critter Gitters.

FOX letter results:
3 anti-"sexiest bachelor in America show/ no emails.

KXTL – ABC Sacramento
November 30th 3 pm

This station has no local community affairs programs. We mailed a letter of complaint to Burtha Mitchell. She and I spoke over the phone and she said that they provide information to the community through local news, and their web site and web calendar listings. They let us in to view the public file without issue. However, my letter was not in the file reportedly, it was still on the Public Affairs Director's desk awaiting a reply. The issues they "claimed" to cover through the news for 3rd Quarter were: Arts and Culture, Business, Crime, Educations, Environment, Health, Human Services, Public Sector, Youth and Seniors. Overall about 30% of these news stories were not relative to the community, they were crime reports. Their children's programming was mostly cartoons with only two decent shows.

<u>Show</u>	<u>Day/Time</u>	<u>Quality</u>
Disney's Recess	Sat 7-7:30	Questionable
Disney's 1 Saturday	Sat 7:30 – 9:30	Questionable
Sabrina animated	Sat 9:30-10	Bad
Bugs Bunny/Tweety	Sat 10- 10:30	Bad
Schoolhouse Rock	5 minutes each Sat.	Great!
Winnie the Pooh	Sat 10:30 –11	Questionable
Mickey Mouseworks	Sat 11- 11:30	Questionable
Squigglevision	Sat 11:30-12	Unknown
Pepper Ann	none	Good (planned for next quar)
Bill Nye	12:30 - 1	Great!

Letter results for KXTL: Letters to the stations were slim but they included emails. The main controversy was over Dr. Laura. It was about a 50/50 split pro and con.

KCRA NBC Sacramento
December 4th 12 noon

The receptionist did not know what we were asking for when we said we were there to inspect the FCC public file. He told us he left a voice mail message with the public affairs director, Carol Belleyeo, and we'd have to wait until she returned. After further conversation he gave us her assistant. The assistant did not want to let us in. I told her that by law we were entitled led to view the public file. She went off in a huff leaving us to wait. Shortly there after, we were told to go up stairs and down the hall with no escort. Once up there, a few folks noticed us and asked what we were up to so we explained. A more experienced staff realized that they should handle us in a professional manner. We got to see the file and the letter was in it.

As of January they are down from 3 shows a month to one half hour a month!
The show is called Common Cause.

Here are the issues they reported covering in the 3rd quarter.
Education, Health (a lot of stories) Crime, Public Assistance, Youth,
Families, Economy, The Elderly, Human Rights, City Growth and PSA.
These did not include crime reports.
Here is an accounting of their children's programming.

<u>Show</u>	<u>Day/Time</u>	<u>Quality</u>
City Guys	Sat 10-10:30	Bad (planned for next quar)
One World	Sat 10:30 – 11	Questionable (planned for next quar)
Saved by the Bell	Sat 3-3:30	Bad
Hang time	3:30 – 4	Bad (planned for next quar)
City Guys	Sat 4-4:30	Bad (planned for next quar)

NBA Inside Stuff	Sat 4:30-5	Good
Just Deal	Sat 11:00	Unknown (planned for next quar)
US Olympic Gold	3 dates	Great!
Pressure I	Sat 5:30-6 am	Great!
Remarkable Journey	1 date	Good
US Olympic Gold	2 dates	Great!
Perceptions	1 date	Good
De Colores	1 date	Great!
Olympic Trials	2 dates	Good
All-Star weekend	1 date	Unknown
CA Gold Olympics	1 date	Good
Wild Moments	no times	Good (planned for next quar)

Letter results for KCRA:

2 – showed porn sites in report on protecting kids from porn

5 pro – Rick Chase

6 anti-Rick Chase

KOVR – CBS Sacramento

December 4th 1:30 pm

We met the public affairs director, Erin Komatsubara. She did not have our letter in her file but she asked me to fax it to her. They have a once a week local program, This Week in California, which airs Sunday at 8 am for one half hour. The content of the program was not included in the 3rd quarter file! They listed the following issues: Crime, Economy, Environment, Government, Health and Misc. Again about 33% were crime reports and not useful information for the community. They did list non-broadcast contributions--speeches and emcees. They had few very good children's programs and the rest was cartoons some better than others.

Show	Day/Time	Quality
Anatole	Saturday 7 – 7:30	Unknown
Blaster's Universe	Sat. 7:30 – 8	Good
Rescue Heroes	Sat. 8:00 – 8:30	Great!
Flying Rhino JH	Sat. 8:30 – 9	Good
New Tales – Crypt	Sat 9:00 – 9:30	Bad!
Mythic Warriors	Sat. 9:30 – 10	Questionable
Blue's Clues	Sat 7 (3 dates)	Great! (planned for next quarter)
Dora the Explorer	Sat. 7:30 (3 dates)	Unknown
Little Bear	Sat. 8 am (3 dates)	Questionable (planned for next quar)
Little Bill	Sat 8:30 (3 dates)	Questionable (planned for next quar)
Franklin	Sat 9 am (3 times)	Questionable (planned for next quar)

Kipper	Sat 9:30 (3 times)	Unknown (planned for next quar)
Sideline NFL	1 time only	Good
Wild America	No times	Great (planned for next quar)

Letters results for KOVR:

- 1 – too liberal
- 1 - pro- “Judging Amy”
- 1 - vote should go to Gore
- 1 – Vote is too confusing
- 1 – anti-“Ricki Lake”
- 1 – opposed to naked breasts in report on breast cancer

San Francisco visits with Patrick Phair,
December 8th
ABC KGO San Francisco 2:30

The public affairs director I spoke with on the phone and wrote to was Ginny Yamate. When I arrived at the station the receptionist told me that she left a voice mail and I would need to wait for Greg Guisso. One hour late and with a number of my requests, she found out that he wasn't even in the building! She made a few more phone calls and turned up Adam Polcek. He informed me that he didn't have keys to the file. Then a woman stepped in and said she did have keys. By now they all realized that this was very unprofessional and very illegal. I was finally let in to see the file. They have one community program “Sunday on 7” for one half hour at 10 am. This show covered Freedom from Hunger, Profiles in Excellence, Educate 2000 and Equestrian Classic. The issues and needs reported the following stories: 9 Transportation, 12 Youth, 8 Income, 10 Education.

My letter was in the file.

The letters to the station were mostly on the election coverage, schools, sports, and that there were too many commercials. They had similar quality children's programming to their Sacramento affiliate.

CBS KPIX San Francisco 3:30

The public affairs director, Lean Sullivan, was not in. We were referred to Heather Campbell. She did not know the file so I lead her to what I needed. There were no letters from the public in the file after September, therefore, did not find my letter. She offered to get back to me once she found out where the letters were.

This station has one community show, Bay Sunday at 6:30 am for one half hour. The issues and needs report listed the following categories: Health, Community, Public Safety, Education, Cultural & Ethnic Issues, Children and Teens, Politics. They did have the non-broadcast list in the file.

Their PSA list was Community Events, Environment Y& Recycling, Education, Health and Safety.

Their children's programming is identical to their Sacramento affiliate.

FOX KTVU Oakland 4:45PM

Of all the visits we made Rosy Chu was the most professional. She has been the public affairs director for 29 years. They have one community show, Bay Area People at 6 am on Sunday for one half hour.

The issues and needs reports listed these stories: 12 Consumer, 5 Crime Justice, 16 Education, 10 Local Economy, 16 Health, 17 Racism & Minority, 16 Social Issues, 25 Transportation, Energy and Environment. They had a strong list of PSA's.

They had the letters and emails on a computer to view. They did not have my letter but she remembered talking with me over the phone and had been given a heads up from the Sacramento affiliate to be on the lookout for me. I offered to fax her the letter.

They have This Week in Baseball, Animal Rescue, Wild Moment, Under the Helmet, Awesome Adventure, Critters Gitters, Magic Bus.

The letters were mostly about the election coverage and thanks.

Dec 6th 1pm

NBC KRON San Francisco

The Public Affairs director is Javier Valencia, I have talked with him on the phone a few times and visited him twice. I have found him to be a very helpful professional. They have the most community programs of all the stations I visited: Latin Eyes, Bay Area Backroads, For Heavens Sakes, Lightworks and Jewish Perspective. However, the last three are religious programs and only address spiritual issues.

My letter was not in his file so I faxed it to him. The file had complaints on the Nike Olympic Commercial and thanks.

They had the non-broadcast listing and emails in the file.

The issues and needs reports were: Civil Rights/Multicultural/Diversity/Race, Education, Government, Housing/Homelessness, Transportation, Crime/Law, Employment.

Their children's programming was very similar to their Sacramento Affiliate.

Los Angeles

Station Visits Partner: Diana Manecehia, Program Officer, Latino Public Broadcasting Project

ABC; Visited Friday, 12-8-00, 4:00 PM

Community Programming:

Only 3 items listed:

A. "Vista LA," A latino, magazine-style show including features on topics such as latino music, films, history, etc.

B. 15 hours, 23 minutes, 55 seconds of PSA's (Public Service Announcements) listed as issues dealing with health care, women's concerns, environment, consumer reports, youth concerns, race relations, individual and family matters, and politics.

C. 33 hours of local news programming

Children's Programming:

6 "generic" (non-educational) cartoons, 5 education-oriented shows, including: One Saturday Morning, School House Rock, Bill Nye, the Science Guy, Disney's Doug, and Squigglevision

Letters From Viewers:

Files are not broken down into months (as they were with the other stations). Instead, had one big file for the year labeled "Network." This made it extremely difficult to sort through.

In this file was over approximately 100 letters, mostly from viewers requesting taped copies of show they missed or asking that their favorite episode of shows be re-run. 4 letters of objection were included; one claiming "The Practice" was anti-semitic, and noting that copies of the letter were sent to all who advertised on the show, one claiming a lack of Afro-American representation on "The Practice," one objecting to a Jane Fonda interview - on the grounds that it is offensive to American Veterans, and one objecting to a shot of 3 women in bras and underwear during the opening of Monday night football.

I did not find our letter in the file.

Non-broadcasting commitments: Non listed

FOX, visited 12-8-00, 11:30 AM

Community Programming:

Only one listed, "Midday Sunday." This airs weekly; had episode on 7-2 about helping gang members get a job, episode on 7-9 was about the Los Angeles Police Department and the Democratic National Convention, episode on 7-16

was devoted entirely to the DNC, and the 7-23 episode was about the Los Angeles City Commission on the Status of Women, and local wetlands. The show is currently on hiatus until February. Only other "community programming" listed was news broadcasts.

Children's Programming: 3 categories listed

A. PSA's from non-profit groups; one on July 4, one on August 5, and one on September 10

B. PSA's from FOX, 4-7 daily

C. Shows - The Magic School Bus (educational, shown daily), This Week In Baseball (shown daily), and Under the Helmet (daily pre-game show, shown daily during the NFL season).

Letters From Viewers:

Only filed through August. NOTHING filed for September, October, or November (which is problematic, since letters are supposed to be in the file within 45 days). Our letter was not yet filed.

Non-Broadcast Commitments:

9-9-00, David Garcia served as MC for Big Bear Discovery Center fundraising event

9-10-00, Tony Gonzalez participated in Mexican Independence Parade

9-15-00, Christine Devine served as MC for New Directions For Youth awards ceremony

9-15-00, Susan Hirasuna & Randy Kerdoon served as MC for East LA Sheriff's Station VIDA Charity Golf Classic

9-15-00, Tony Valdez served as MC for Spotlight Awards 2000

9-21-00, Susan Hirasuna served as MC for Language Right/Health Access Event at Japanese American National Museum

9-24-00, Jeff Michael made special appearance at the Crown Guild's 26th Annual Gourmet Festival of Fall benefiting Ability First

9-29-00, Tony Valdez, served as MC for the Housing Authority of the city of LA annual fundraiser

CBS, visited 12-1-00, 1:00 PM

Community Programming: Very little listed; just Woman to Woman, Schools 2

Careers (Special, only in the month of October), News, Reports, and Rosebowl Parade Coverage

Children's Programming: 13 cartoons, only 1 educational - "Blues Clues"

Letters From Viewers:

Month of November not filed yet, hence our letter not filed (as it probably arrived in November)

Month of October letters: 4 in favor of Dr. Laura, 1 against Dr. Laura, 1 from the League of Women Voters requesting candidate air time

NBC, visited 12-1-00, 10:00 AM

SPECIAL NOTE: NBC was extremely uncooperative. When we arrived at the gate and said we were there to see the public file, the security guard made a phone call and told us "He doesn't have time to meet with you today. "I told him we did not need to meet with anyone, just see the file, which we legally have a right to do without an appointment. He then told us to park and go to the lobby, where someone would help us. We came into the main lobby, and the woman behind the desk phoned a security person by the name of "Almos." I believe Almos is the same person we spoke to at the gate. Almos had her inform us that we were not allowed on the lot, as our security clearance had been denied and that we had to leave, go to an outside phone, and call the general number. When we asked her what that number was, she claimed not to know. When I challenged her on this, she called Almos back and let me speak to him. Almos told me our security clearance to enter the lot was denied, and that we would have to leave. I asked him who denied it, and he said it was the man in charge of the Public File. I asked him for that man's name, and he said the man instructed him not to give it to me. During this conversation, 2 other security guards approached the front desk, as if to be present in case we caused a "problem." I then phoned the CA PBTv Chair Ms. Grieco who instructed me to let them know that if we are denied access to the public file, we will have to report them to the FCC, which will put their license in jeopardy. I called Almos back and told him this. He put me on hold and contacted his supervisor. When he came back on the line, he let me know our security access had been approved and that one of the security people standing around us would escort us to it. The security guard escorted us to another lobby where Bill Emerson, who is the head of programming, took us to the file. Bill Emerson was very cordial, but did inform us that a security camera was monitoring us.

We only had time enough time to examine the letters to the station. Our letter is in the November file, along with 9 other letters from viewers on various, non-substantial topics.

We welcome your comments or questions. You can reach Helen Grieco at capres@canow.org or 707 258-2994.

Sincerely,



Helen Grieco, CA Chair People for Better TV

Leah Wyman, Southern CA PBTv

CA Chapter Members

Media Alliance

Citizens for Independent Public Broadcasting

Latino Public Broadcasting Project

Pacific News Service

CA Chicano News Media

Hispanic Media Coalition

Independent Media Institute

Deaf Entertainment Foundation

Access Channel City of Compton

Fair in Accuracy and Reporting

Bay Area Video Coalition

Media Image Coalition

NALEO

NCLR

Free Press

Department of Media Studies University of San Francisco

School of the Americas Watch West

CA Commission on the Status of Women

Pacoima, Council Member, Alex Padilla

LA City Human Relations Commission

Consumer Action

Consumer Federation of CA

National Writers Union UAW AFL-CIO

National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians

Coalition of Labor Union Women

Peace Action

LA Urban League

Bread 4 the World

Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund

National Asian Women's Health Organization

Multi-Cultural Collaborative

NAACP

Jamaica Cultural Alliance

Children of Gays and Lesbians Everywhere

Lavender Alliance

CA National Organization for Women

NWPC

League of Women Voters
Older Women's League
Center for Young Women's Development
CA Women's Agenda
First African Methodist Episcopal Church
Wilshire Blvd. Temple
LA Archdiocese
United University Church
National Conference of Christian's and Jews

Tab B2

Letters from Chicago

Chicago Coalition of People for Better TV

Marlene Baker

Rob Barto

Sharon Campbell

Daniella Djordjevic

Kela M. Ellis

Michael F. Fries

Elan Kleis

Joan D. Levin

Karla Palomo

Nicole Reddick

Susana Torres

Alan Trubow

Joseph Ulrey



December 11, 2000

RE: NPRM FCC 00-345

Chairman William Kennard
Federal Communications Commission
c/o People for Better TV
818 18th Street NW #505
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Chairman Kennard,

The members of the Chicago Coalition of People for Better TV support the FCC's proposed rules on disclosure, ascertainment, and other public interest obligations of broadcasters. We are writing to share our observations and concerns about the public interest performance of broadcasters in Chicago.

We encourage the Commission to require broadcasters to conduct an annual ascertainment of community issues and to report on programming and public service announcements that address these issues in a standardized report form that is easily accessible online.

Over the last few months, members of our coalition and students in a journalism class at Columbia College Chicago have written and visited local broadcasters to evaluate their responsiveness to the public and their performance relating to the FCC's rules regarding the content and accessibility of the public files. With few exceptions, we have been shocked at the lack of compliance and responsibility of these broadcast stations.

Here is a summary of our findings and concerns.

WBBM-TV (Channel 2) – The letters we wrote to the station early in November were not found in the public files during our station visits at the end of the month and the station has not responded to the letters. The most current letter in the public file at this CBS affiliate was dated November 4. There were no email messages in the public files and no letters relating to children's programming in the files of letters received over the last nine months. One researcher stated that "the format of the Quarterly Reports on public interest programming made it difficult to quickly ascertain what community leaders have been involved and what community issues have been covered in these reports."

The researchers were disappointed to note that programming segments addressing community issues decreased substantially between 1996 and 2000. Based on her monitoring of the channel, one researcher noted that the public service announcements appeared to be inadequate in quantity and timing. She also noted that her travel time to and from the station and her exploration of the files used half a day of her time.

WMAQ-TV (Channel 5) – The researchers were surprised that there appeared to be only 1-2 letters from viewers per month in the files of this NBC affiliate. The letter that was sent by the Columbia College student was not found in the file. Station representatives told the researchers that they have an abundance of emails from the public about their programs, that emails from the public are kept on a disk, but that they did not know the location of the disk.

WLS-TV (Channel 7)– Our researchers noted that many items appeared to be missing from the public files including the license, applications and related materials, citizen agreements, contour maps, ownership records, list of contracts required to be filed with the FCC, employment records, and copies of the FCC manual. In reviewing the files of letters from viewers, they noted that there was no tabulation of complaints or subjects and no indications that the letters had been read or answered. They were surprised to find complaints about the anchors and reporters being biased, which they did not see at the other stations.

On a separate visit, another team of researchers noticed that the files of viewer mail from September to November were not available. The station representative said that the letters from those months were on her desk and that she had not had time to file them yet. The files relating to children's programming were not available and the station representative said that she didn't know "if they had a file for that."

In reviewing the public affairs programming reports for this ABC affiliate, researchers noted that there was a major drop in local programs dealing with community issues from October 1997 (30) to June 2000 (13).

WFLD-TV (Channel 32) – The student researchers who visited this Fox affiliate on November 29 were repeatedly asked who they were, where they were from, and why they wanted to see the files. The director of community affairs wanted to know which files they wanted and why. She told them that they couldn't just look at all the files if they didn't know what they were looking for, and that they could only have 45 minutes because she "had other work to do." From the time they entered the station it took the students approximately 35 minutes to see files; the community affairs director gave them three to look at, including the file of viewer mail from November. The most recent letter in the file was dated November 6 and the letter from the student, which was mailed on November 15, was not in the file.

When the students asked to copy materials from the public files, the community affairs director told them that the copier wasn't working (although they had heard it running during their visit) and that they would have to come back later or the next day to pick up their copies. Someone who identified themselves as a reporter for the station subsequently called the journalism department at Columbia College asking questions about the students' research and claiming to have interviewed the students. Overall, the student researchers felt that they were harassed by station personnel, that their experience was "very disturbing," and that the community affairs director was "condescending, authoritarian, and intimidating."

WYCC (Channel 20) – The student researchers reported that they had difficulty gaining access to the files at this public television station, that they waited 20 minutes, and that station personnel told them to “make an appointment next time.” They found only 8 viewer letters in the files dating back to 1993, including one sent earlier in the month by a fellow student.

WCIU-TV (Channel 26) – Our researcher asked to see the public files and was told to wait for 45 minutes as the person in charge of the files was gone. When she gained access to the files, she noticed that they were in chronological order with the last materials filed in August. The station representative said that she didn’t have time to file all of it. The student asked how they replied to the letters and how often the letters were filed, but the station representative didn’t know.

WSNS-TV (Channel 44) – The students who visited this station were surprised to find that there were no negative letters in the public files. All of the letters that they were shown by the program director contained only favorable comments. Two weeks prior to their visit, a classmate had written a letter of complaint to the station, but it wasn’t in the file. The students wondered what happened to letters with unfavorable comments. “Aren’t the letters with unfavorable comments about the station also considered a part of the public file?”

WPWR-TV (Channel 50) – When the researchers visited the station on December 1, they waited 45 minutes to gain access to the files and had to provide their driver’s licenses, which the station copied. They found approximately 20 viewer letters per month in the files, but there was no November file and no letter from the student, which had been mailed on November 15.

WYTN-TV (Channel 56) – The researchers were greeted cordially by station personnel, found the files in order, found the letter from the student with reply attached, and learned that copies of the public files were available at the Gary Public Library. In his letter of response to the student, the station’s president said that the “station is committed to including local and regional PSAs in our schedule whenever possible. I would add however that the availability of PSAs from area non-profits often fluctuates from month to month.”

WJYS-TV (Channel 62) – On Friday, December 1, researchers drove one hour south from downtown Chicago to Tinley Park, Illinois, to visit this station and review the public files. When they arrived at the station, the station manager, Shawn Hill, would not allow them to see the files. He asked who they were and where they were from. When our researchers presented him with a copy of the FCC rule regarding access to the public files, he said that they would have to come back on Monday. When they pointed out that they had a right to have access to the files during normal business hours without making an appointment, he again refused to let them review the files and told them to come back on Monday. As they were not able to make the 2-hour roundtrip again, we were not able to review and evaluate the files at this station.

Chairman Kennard, based on the challenges and difficulties of reviewing the public files of the broadcast television stations in the Chicago market as we have described above, we strongly urge you to go forward with your proposed rules as described in FCC 00-345. We encourage you to establish a standardized reporting form and to require broadcasters to consult with community leaders and report on their ascertainment activities on a quarterly basis. We urge you to require that the report and the public files be maintained on the Internet so that they are available 24-hours a day to citizens and viewers. We further request that you ask broadcasters to report on the source, content and scheduling of their public affairs programming and public service announcements.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our views and research on these important issues.

Sincerely,

Concerned Citizens and
Members of the Chicago Coalition of People for Better TV

Dr. Carl Bell, Community Mental Health Council
Charles Benton, Public Media Inc.
Michael Brennan
Kimberly Broome, Illinois Violence Prevention Authority
Diane E. Brown, Illinois Public Interest Research Group
Gay Bruhn, NOW